

PEOPLE & THINGS By ATTICUS

LET it never be said that the Lord Great Chamberlain does not take his duties seriously or fails to warn those whose profession is to explain English history to tourists from abroad. I have before me a solemn warning just issued by the Lord Chamberlain's Office to the corps of guides on how to conduct and instruct visitors to our various temples of fame. Here are the rules for taking parties through Westminster Hall on Saturdays:

1. Historical disquisitions about such matters as Henry VIII's wives and the Pilgrim Fathers, if given at all, should be in the briefest terms as they have very little relevance to the Palace of Westminster.
2. Some guides air their views too much at the expense of giving the public factual information.
3. Some guides take too long and talk too much. Forty minutes should be the maximum time for a tour.
4. There have been a few cases of flippant or improper observations about Parliament and Members.

I agree that disquisitions on the wives of Henry VIII might be better in small quantities but flippancy is a relative term.

Absentee

NO ribald comment could have been made upon the scene last Wednesday when the serried ranks of the American Bar Association almost filled Westminster Hall. As always the Lord Chancellor was felicitous and, as usual, he was dignified without being pretentious.

A special luncheon was given for a number of our American legal visitors on Tuesday when Sir Robert Boothby was to have been in the chair, but unhappily he had been taken to hospital suffering from a heart attack. Sir Robert, like most men of intelligence and personality, suffers somewhat from the defects of his virtues. He is so brilliant a speaker that he could put the case for the Government in a debate and then cross the Floor of the House and demolish his own arguments. But that does not imply insincerity.

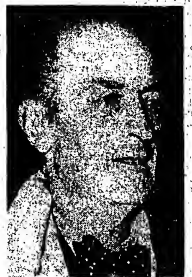
The truth is that with each succeeding General Election the personalities of the House of Commons are fewer while the average intelligence grows higher. "This will be known as the utility Parliament," said Sir Robert Boothby a few weeks ago; but not even that mild criticism, if it be a criticism, will lessen the warmth of his reception when he returns to his seat just below the gangway.

The Hongkong Story

SIR ALEXANDER GRANTHAM, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Hongkong, is in London—or he was when I talked with him a couple of days ago. He was appointed to that dual post ten years ago and quite rightly his proconsul-

ship has been renewed again and again.

His Excellency is slim, fair-headed and alert. He listens well but talks even better. Certainly if he were trying to sell business lots in Hongkong he could not have been more enthusiastic about the Island



Sir Alexander Grantham.

that has emerged from a sinister twilight to a golden noon-day. When I told him that I was going to Canada for the opening of Parliament this autumn he said: "Why don't you come to Hongkong for the week-end? It's only a jump from Vancouver by air and you would be back in no time if you're in a rush."

Embryo Chicago

ACCORDING to him Hongkong is something between an enchanted island and an embryo Chicago. Sixteen-storey buildings have sprung up, there is the largest general hospital in the Commonwealth, they are building a new £8 million airport, and the two local newspapers, one Chinese and one British, carry more foreign news than any popular newspaper in Britain.

But it is not all sunshine. The Chinese, who make up the enormous majority of the labour force, see no reason why they should not be allowed to work longer hours so that they can have more money to spend. Apparently this has caused some dismay to the trade-union leaders who by their vocation have been taught that workers should demand more pay for less work. However, according to Sir Alexander, the relations between employers and the unions are good. There is still trouble with smugglers but on the whole I was left with a picture that was colourful and vibrant. It would be interesting to drop in on His Excellency for a week-end.

You Have Been Warned!

A LIVELY letter has come from a reader apropos of this column's recent comment on smoking in cinemas and our assertion that the British have claims to being the most insensitive people in the world. He encloses a Press clipping from an Indian newspaper which is such a model of con-

densation and restraint that it must be reproduced herewith as an example for our own popular newspapers:

SMOKED IN TRAIN AT RISK OF LIFE

NEW DELHI.

A third-class passenger in India who persisted in smoking despite repeated warnings from a fellow passenger was eventually killed by the non-smoker, the House of the People was told recently.

Mr. P. Subba Rao (Independent, Orissa), who told of the incident during the debate on the Railway Budget, suggested that to avoid such incidents the railways should ban smoking, at least in third-class compartments.

Mr. Shah Nawaz Khan, Deputy Railway Minister, rejected the suggestion and added: "If people smoke without permission from their fellow passengers they will be doing so at their own risk."

Sacha Guitry

THE death of Sacha Guitry removes from the Paris scene a gifted and brilliant man whose career stopped short of greatness because he was not content to live only in the theatre. To him the comedy and romance of life itself were more fascinating than anything the stage could offer. In this he was unlike his great father Lucien who lived not so much in himself as in the parts he played in the theatre. In fact, so completely was Lucien a man of the theatre that it was once said of him that he was only himself when he was being someone else.

By contrast, to Sacha Guitry the stage was an occupation whereas life itself was his pre-occupation. As a personality he added radiance to the era in which he lived and Paris mourns one of her most beloved sons.

Ancient Glories

NOT long ago Mr. Harman Nicholls, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works, making a tour of his Department's charges in Wales, came to the conclusion



A detail from Alan Sorrell's design of Harlech Castle.

that visitors to ancient buildings now in carefully-preserved ruin needed some help to their imaginations in visualising how these great castles, keeps, Roman villas and so on looked in their heyday.

The outcome is a series of paintings done with the aid of antiquarian experts, each of them destined to be displayed near the entrance to its respective ruin.

They are now on show to Members in the Houses of Parliament. The sample I reproduce here is from a splendid design of Harlech with gay caravels anchored at its foot.

France v. Britain

I MUST now put on record that last week-end the British Parliament met the French Parliament on the field of sport at Deauville. I use the term

"field of sport" in its literary sense although there was also the raking of the dingles. This aquatic contest, by the way, might have caused a spate of by-elections, since the weather was so vile that all our contestants were capsize. However, the British golfers completely vanquished their French opponents, largely thanks to the prowess of William Stephen Ian Whitelaw (the massive P.P.S. to the Chancellor of the Exchequer) who drives a ball 300 yards and takes a mashie for a 225-yard approach.

As usual Mr. André gave an enormous banquet in the Casino with showers of illuminated stars outside the windows and with lesser stars from the Paris theatres on the improvised stage. The gaming tables in the Casino were in full blast, with roulette as the chief attraction. My own zeal for roulette was checked, some years ago by the profound comment of a London book-maker, who gazed at the table and then said: "What? Thirty-six runners and all trying? No thanks." And at that he had left out zero.

The general impression was that the British Parliament had won the day, but no one seemed quite certain. At any rate it was all to the good that our M.P.s should meet and talk with their opposite numbers of the French Parliament.

Husband's Choice

LAST week I ventured to express some adverse comments on the prevailing fashion of women's hats. As a result I can now present the support of at least one of my feminine readers who writes as follows:

You should see my hats. All have that which you seek—elegant, desirable, elegance, chic. They are found, chosen and bought by my husband; very often I am not even there. Like you he abhors the unbecoming affairs so popular, but it is up to the husbands and boy-friends to insist on becoming hats.

This indeed is a challenge to the male readers of THE SUNDAY TIMES. At any rate we have lit a candle if not a torch.

Same Again, Please

MEN of science can be very human, and their discussions are not always so erudite as may sound to the lay ear. The gaff was blown on one occasion by a business man who, having a slight knowledge of Greek, knew that the word "isotope" derives from "iso topos"—same place (in the table of elements). He overheard in an hotel the following conversation between some scientists who were evidently arranging another genial meeting for the next day:

"All—right for tomorrow? Isotope? Iso tempus?"

A third member of the group, evidently wishing to make quite sure about the trysting place, added, "Isobor?"

People and Words

It is always jam today and never jam tomorrow on Britain's roads! —MR. GRESHAM COOKE, M.P.

When I was nine I was the Demon King in "Cinderella" and it appears to have launched me on a long and happy life of being a monster. —MR. BORIS KARLOFF.

I am not ruined and I am not broke—but I don't think that I shall be able to afford to live as long as I had hoped. —LORD BEVERIDGE.

If you have been convicted of felony you cannot run a public house but there is no legal bar to your becoming the headmaster of a private school.

—MR. MICHAEL STEWART, M.P.

The Postmaster-General should ensure that people whose telephones are tapped are charged as for a shared telephone.

—MR. SYDNEY SILVERMAN, M.P.